

Bargain price for uncirculated '84 coins, maybe

By Roger Boye

Hobbyists may be in for a rare treat late this summer—a price reduction on sets of 1984 uncirculated coins offered by Uncle Sam.

Mint executives want to keep the cost to no more than \$7.50 each, according to sources quoted in Numismatic News. The government last sold uncirculated sets in 1981, charging \$11 for coins with a face value of \$4.82.

This year's sets will contain \$1.82 worth of coins—three fewer pieces than the 1981 version—because Susan B. Anthony dollars are no longer minted. Nevertheless, packaging this year should be similar to the sealed plastic sheets used in 1981 and before, observers say.

Meanwhile, Mint Director Donna Pope has decided that order forms for sets will be mailed to collectors in September, according to Coin World.

● During the Arab oil embargo in 1974, bureaucrats printed 4.8 billion gasoline rationing coupons for use if supplies decreased.

The oil shortage soon evaporated, of course, but the coupons didn't. Government workers shipped the 126,000 boxes of unwanted coupons to Pueblo, Colo., where they still are stored at a cost to taxpayers of \$20,000 a year.

At least one congressman thinks that's a waste, saying Uncle Sam should turn its junk into cash by selling some or all of the coupons to coin and currency collectors.

"While the sale might be unorthodox, it is no different from selling any other surplus government property," said U.S. Rep. Frank Annunzio [D-Ill.] in a letter to the Secretary of Energy.

Government experts have rejected as too expensive suggestions to simply destroy the hoard, saying the job would cost as much as \$250,000.

● Fifty years ago yesterday, the country's first diesel-powered streamliner, the Pioneer Zephyr, left Denver to open the 1934 session of the Century of Progress International Exposition in Chicago.

It made the 1,015-mile trip in 13 hours and 5 minutes, averaging 77.5 m.p.h., in what experts say is still the fastest non-stop journey in U.S. railroad history. The train's power unit went to the Smithsonian Institution and its three cars still stand on the lawn of the Museum of Science and Industry.

To commemorate the event, the Midwest Railway Historical Society, a not-for-profit organization, is selling a 1½-inch medal in seven types of metals or alloys. Prices range from 50 cents for an aluminum specimen to \$25 for a one-ounce silver piece, with \$2 extra per order for shipping and insurance. To order or for more information, write the society at P.O. Box RR, Riverside, Ill. 60546.